

In 1850 the elders came from Christ's  
church of latter days.  
The gospel in its fulness swelled her soul  
with joy and praise  
That she could know salvation's plan  
While still she lived on earth,  
And with some of her children be baptized  
And have new birth.  
As time passed she longed for Zion  
Where her son had found a home —  
And for the first time in her seventy  
three years  
Wee Granny began to roam.  
She bade farewell to loved ones,  
Last looked at the bonnie braes,  
A lone, but happy pilgrim  
She set out upon her way.  
Across the wide Atlantic in a sailing  
Vessel tossed,  
From New York on to Iowa,  
But she counted not the cost  
On her frail and aging body  
For her spirit was so strong,  
And she felt so close to Utah  
She could travel right along.  
With the Martin Company,  
The last to leave  
Her unhappy lot was cast, their handcarts  
broke, their food was scarce,  
They felt the chilling blast of a hard  
and early winter  
But bravely they went along.  
In their hearts a prayer to God, and on  
their lips a song."  
Perhaps old Chimney Rock would speak  
With the voice of the sighing wind —  
"I saw that last brave handcart band  
And my stone heart wept within.  
Scores of women, children and aged  
From a mild and gentle land,  
Combating hunger, fear and weariness,  
'Twas more than the strong could stand.  
At my side those brave souls huddled,  
Sick and dying, cold and weak,  
But no complaining word or grumble  
Did I ever hear them speak.  
I longed to reach my rough arms out  
And lift them as they fell,  
But they sang as they buried their many  
dead

'All is well — all is well.'"  
I'd lift my head with pride and reverence —  
"My Wee Granny's buried at your feet,  
How she longed to enter Utah  
The saints and her son to meet.  
She was never known to murmur  
She did her tasks both large and small  
With her life she loved the gospel  
And for it she gave her all.  
When her weary life was ebbing  
With her eyes turned to the west —  
'Tell my son John, I faced Zion  
When I died, he'll know the rest.'  
She truly was a Saint,  
Chimney Rock, you're the monument to show  
The hallowed ground wherein she lies,  
You're the sign to make us know  
How much we owe Wee Granny for the blessed  
gospel light.  
Oh, may we never fail her  
But keep her ideals bright."

— Virginia D. Christensen

Great-Great-Grand-daughter

*This was given to  
Dr. R. Raymond Green  
by Annie L. Clyde  
8-14-74*

A history of  
**MARY MURRAY MURDOCH**  
as given at the  
**JAMES MURDOCH REUNION — 1956**

We honor the Mormon Pioneers, those brave men and women, exiles from their homes, who crossed the rugged plains, colonized a desolate desert, and made it to blossom, and then bequeathed it to us for our dwelling place. 1956 is the 100th anniversary of the Handcart Pioneers. They were valiant souls who walked to Zion, suffering hardships that we shall never know. They wrote the most dramatic and soul stirring chapter of the Pioneer Story.

By 1855 there were many converts to the church in Northern Europe, who longed to go to Zion, that they might avoid persecution, that they might be with the Saints who lived and believed as they did, and that they might enjoy the wonderful blessings the gospel had to offer. And Zion needed them, but most of these converts were too poor to afford a wagon and oxen to come to Utah after they had arrived in the U.S.

To solve this problem, it was planned to use handcarts that the immigrants could pull themselves. They could actually walk faster than the slow plodding oxen. For \$45.00 an adult could travel from Liverpool to Salt Lake. At Iowa City they would get their handcarts and tents.

These immigrants were a gentle class of people, from a mild climate. They were untrained in pioneering, they knew little of the western prairies, and were unskilled in securing food from a wild country. The Indians were unfriendly. Only a limited amount of baggage was allowed each pioneer, many valuable and prized possessions had to be discarded.

Perhaps we wonder why all these trials, were heaped upon the saints. Surely if they were God's chosen people He could have lightened their burdens and made their journey easier. But the Lord needed strong men and women to build his church, and by this method the weak in the faith were weeded out. Only the devout and true Saints went on.

The first three companies to leave the summer of 1856 arrived successfully in the Valley without much mishap. But the last two companies met with tragedy. Because the handcarts and tents were not ready, the immigrants who were assigned to the Willie and Martin companies, did not leave Iowa City until late in July. They were advised not to make the



trek so late in the season, but it was their desire to go on.

The Martin Company was the last to leave. This group was made up largely of immigrants from England, Scotland and Scandinavia. Many of them were women, children and aged.

One of this group was Wee Granny. She was born Mary Murray, 13 Oct. 1782, at Glencairn, Scotland. Her father was John Murray, and Margaret McCall was her mother. We know very little of Mary until 1811, when on Jan. 10th, she married James Murdoch. James was said to be a 2nd cousin of William Murdoch, the inventor of gas lighting. Mary and James were married in Ayrshire and spent their married life there.

They were the parents of eight children, they were: Janet who married Alexander Smith, Mary who died in childhood, James who married Margaret McCall (The same name as Mary Murray Murdoch's mother), Veronica who married George Caldwell, Mary who married Allan Mair, John Murray who married Ann Steele and Isabella Crawford, Margaret who died in childhood, and William who married Janet Lennox and Mary Reid Lindsay.

Mary was a hard worker, and was a thrifty, frugal wife, and a kind and loving mother to her children. She knew how to control them and still retain their love and respect. She was 4' 7", weighing a little over 90 pounds, blue grey eyes, with a medium complexion.

Her husband, James was employed at the Lime Works, On Oct. 20, 1831, he lost his life trying to rescue a man who had fallen a victim of foul air in the bottom of a new mine shaft they were sinking. They were both overcome by the gas and died.

The sudden death of her husband caused Mary much grief and sorrow, yet she had a brave and courageous spirit, and she was always able to prove herself equal to her task, as she did in this trial.

Wee Granny, as we affectionately know her, was left with her six children, and an orphaned niece, Margaret Murray, who was about four years of age. The four oldest children Janet, James, Veronica and Mary were old enough to work and do for themselves. John was 10 years of age and William was 5. Wee Granny found work for herself as well as the older children, and they were able to provide the necessities of life.

A few years after her husband's death, she was able with the help of her sons, to build a little thatched

roof, stone cottage which they could call their own. Much love and happiness was crowded into its four walls.

In 1907 William Lindsay visited Ayrshire and saw the ruins of Wee Granny's cottage. He also saw the spot where James Murdoch lost his life. The shaft in which he died was just a new one and was about twenty-five feet deep, but after the tragedy it was never sunk any deeper, but was allowed to cave in and fill up. The depression was about 5 feet deep and had wild daisies growing in it.

In 1850 the Mormon elders came to Scotland preaching the restored gospel. John, who was married, readily accepted it. Wee Granny and Mary, her daughter, made a careful and prayerful investigation of the new doctrine and they were also convinced of its truth. They were baptized by John, who held the priesthood and could officiate in this ordinance. Later Veronica and William were baptized. These four, John, Mary, Veronica and William were the ones who came to Utah.

In 1852, John, his wife and two children immigrated to Utah, and in 1856 he sent his mother the money that she might come to Zion. Wee Granny was almost 74 years of age when she started on the long, wearisome 6000 mile journey, alone as far as her family was concerned, but in company with John's brother-in-law, James Steele, his wife and two children, George and James. She had a determined will to accomplish what she deemed was right. She loved the gospel and her desire was to be with her son and the saints in Zion. When she arrived at Iowa City, she was assigned to the Martin Handcart Company. They left Iowa City July 28, and it was a month later that they left Florence, Nebraska, the last settlement for hundreds of miles. Their hastily constructed handcarts were made of unseasoned wood, and they fell to pieces under the hot prairie sun. It took precious time to repair them. The Cheyennes were on the warpath, and word came to the suffering pioneers of massacres by the red men. A. W. Babbitt, secretary of Utah territory and some of his party had been killed. Their food was very scarce, and they were weakened by the lack of nourishment. They were improperly clad for the inclement weather. An early and severe winter had set in. By September there were heavy frosts. Of the 575 members of the company almost one-fourth of them died before they reached Utah. They were buried in shallow graves, usually wrapped only in a sheet. Sometimes a common grave was dug, and all who died that day were buried together, and some poor souls were buried in a bank of snow. Much has been written of the handcart pioneers, and their history is Wee Granny's history.

Wee Granny trudged bravely on as far as Chimney Rock, Nebraska. Here she succumbed to fatigue, exposure and hardships of the journey, on 3 Oct. 1856. Her weary, worn-out body was buried in a shallow grave, without a coffin, by the side of the wagon trail. Just before passing, she said to her friends gathered around her, "Tell John I died with my face toward Zion."

No word of murmur or complaint ever passed her lips. Who shall say she is not entitled to a martyr's crown in the mansions of glory?

To us Wee Granny is a symbol of fineness, bravery, nobleness, of a true Latter-Day Saint — she stands for everything that is good and sweet. She is a living symbol — while in the flesh she personalized these fine qualities, and now her living and progressing spirit is gaining exaltation by these same attributes. May we ever appreciate our Wee Granny, and may we and our children never forget her.

On the broad plains of Nebraska stands a  
lonely sentinel —

Majestic Chimney Rock! what stories it  
could tell.

If only it could speak, I'd say:

"Old Rock, do you recall

The Mormon handcart pioneers who came late  
in the fall

Of eighteen hundred fifty six?

One of the Martin band

Was my little Scottish grandma, enroute  
to the Promised Land.

On the purple heathered highland she had  
spent her childhood days,

There she won a fine Scotch laddie, with  
her sweet and winnings ways.

Eight wee bairns blessed their humble home

And the cup of happiness they quaffed

When the brave, kind husband tried to  
save

A dying man from a gas filled shaft.

Both lost their lives, and my wee grandma

Raised her family alone,

She taught them thrift, and work and love  
of truth

And kin and home.

In a thatched roofed, rough stone cottage

She watched her family grow

And saw them choose mates of their own

And from her fireside go.